**II. Quality of the Project Design**

The **Global Resources for Experiences in Authentic Teaching: Modeling Innovation and Demonstrating Success Project (GREAT MINDS)** as planned by the College of Education of University of West Alabama will promote the use of science, technology, engineering and mathematics in the P-12 curriculum by collaborating globally with experts in STEM fields to identify best practices and by educating and training pre-service and service teachers in the use of hands-on, authentic learning experiences. Furthermore, in a committed effort to increasing the number and proportion of high-need students who persist in and complete college, the project will recruit high needs students from the local service area for the teacher education program and aspires to retain these at-risk students through mentoring and service learning components. The GREAT MINDS Project directly addresses the purpose of the PBI program by establishing an international consortium for the identification, creation and dissemination of best practices in the areas of science, technology, engineering and mathematics education in an effort to improve STEM educational experiences in local P-12 schools, and by attempting to increase the enrollment and retention of the number of Black American students in our teacher education program.

The GREAT MINDS Project will identify and promote the use of best practices in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics through collaboration with the global educational community. The international consortium’s membership will include institutions of higher education; consultants in business, technology and related areas of the private sector; and stakeholders in Pre-K through secondary education. The use of technologies such as Skype for synchronous video conferencing, cameras for video recordings, and blogs for asynchronous discussions will provide a means for collaboration to identify best practices in STEM education. Furthermore, an International STEM Summit hosted on UWA’s campus will bring experts from across the globe to interact either face-to-face or virtually with the local P-12 educators and UWA’s pre-service educators. The personal interaction stands to inspire and motivate the local educators to implement best practices for STEM education in their classrooms.

In order to disseminate these best practices, GREAT MINDS will provide training opportunities for both pre-service science and math teachers in the teacher education program as well as professional development opportunities for teachers already in service in surrounding schools. One significant aspect of the GREAT MINDS Project is the summer enrichment program for both teachers and students. The GREAT MINDS summer camp program will offer teachers from surrounding schools as well as our pre-service teachers an opportunity to attend a week- long summer program where they will learn to guide students in exploring science, technology, engineering and mathematics. Upon successful completion of the teacher portion of the GREAT MINDS summer camp program, these teachers will have the opportunity for hands-on experience in teaching a week-long, integrated, theme-based STEM program for students, pre-K through high school, from surrounding schools. Going “Green”, CSI-UWA, Flying to New Heights and Robotics are themes which will integrate hands-on learning with STEM content to create an exciting learning environment outside of the traditional classroom. The summer program will complement programs that are currently employed on the campus of UWA and encourage collaboration between UWA’s College of Education and College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics. The College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics currently hosts several programs for local elementary and secondary students including Science Saturdays where UWA faculty members lead science activities for students from local schools; W.I.S.E. G.E.M.S. (Women in Sciences Empowering Girls Engaged in Mathematics and Sciences) for girls aged 10 and up to experience mathematics enrichment activities; Science Olympiad for elementary grades; and the West Alabama Regional Science Fair for junior and senior high level students from surrounding counties. The GREAT MINDS summer camp for P-12 aged students will reinforce the current programs and further inspire student interest in STEM areas.

Finally, GREAT MINDS will address the need to increase the number and proportion of high-need students who persist in and complete college by actively recruiting high school juniors and seniors from the surrounding school systems which serve a minority population, pairing entering college freshmen with mentors from UWA’s Colleges of Education and Natural Sciences and Mathematics faculty and upper level peers for the nurturing and support needed for retention, giving them the opportunity to experience STEM outside of the rural community through field trip experiences, and finally, providing them with opportunities to experience and to lead inquiry- based, technology-enriched learning in mathematics and science through service learning projects. The THINK (Transforming Hands-On Ideas In to New Knowledge) portion of the GREAT MINDS Project is designed to collect and analyze data including data on recruitment of freshmen into the College of Education, subsequent enrollment in the teacher education program, graduation from the teacher education program, and job placement. The collection and analysis of data for the THINK portion of the GREAT MINDS will assist UWA in evaluating participant outcomes in order to improve postsecondary student outcomes relating to enrollment, persistence, and completion of the teacher education program as well as and leading to career success.

The GREAT MINDS Project encompasses the ideals of the PBI grant program including global collaboration, STEM education, teacher preparation, and improving outcomes of Black American males as well as Black American females (as seen in Figure #). The comprehensive approach of the GREAT MINDS Project for the recruitment, preparation, and retention of STEM educators from this impoverished, rural community makes this program an innovative approach to address the significant need of increasing the number of high-need students enrolled in and who persist in college through graduation and are prepared to be inspiring STEM educators.

1. ***The extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified and measurable.***

**Goal 1: Establish an international consortium to identify and discuss best practices in STEM education.**

The first goal of the GREAT MINDS Project is to establish an international STEM consortium comprised of institutions of higher education; consultants in business, technology and related areas of the private sector; and stakeholders in Pre-K through secondary education. The goal of forming such a consortium is to develop a synergistic relationship among stakeholders for the identification, creation and dissemination of best practices in the areas of science, technology, engineering and mathematics curricula throughout the education process.

The GREAT MINDS consortium will solicit potential partnerships in countries that outpaced the United States on the 2007 Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) sponsored by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA), and the 2009 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. Member countries currently under consideration include South Korea, consistently ranked highly in both studies; Finland, identified among the top European performers in the PISA study; and China and the United Kingdom, representing the best of both Europe and Asia in the TIMSS.

Members of the PBI grant writing team are actively networking with internationally located colleagues to form the higher education component of the partnership. They also maintain contacts with STEM-related representatives of such private sector organizations as Google and government entities, including the Marshall Space Flight Center. Additionally, the recipients of the Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching; National Board Certified Teachers; and other award winning classroom teachers will be sought as members of the consortium. Finally, integral to the success of the project are the identification and involvement of the member countries’ pre-school through secondary level educational institutions.

Among the primary objectives of the GREAT MINDS consortium are:

* 1. the sharing and discussion of STEM best practices among colleagues via Skype and similar live-capture technologies;
  2. consistent and close consultation with and collaboration between educational and non-educational members, such as Google and the Marshall Space Flight Center, to ensure that the consortium’s identified best practices in STEM are indeed viable practices with real-world application;
  3. the use of streaming video and the exchange of pre-recorded “best practices” videos to be maintained in a central repository for use by all members;
  4. activities such as “quad blogging” by undergraduate students with their counterparts in other member countries;
  5. interaction between/among higher education partners and teacher candidates to discuss STEM pedagogy;
  6. the monitoring and implementation of the most current and emerging technologies for providing a climate of rich, vigorous participation, whether synchronously or asynchronously; and
  7. sharing responsibility for adapting identified best practices to the unique needs, considerations of cultural diversity, and available resources of the international membership.

By forming an international consortium for STEM best practices, The University of West Alabama, a rural university, will bring together some of the world’s great minds to share their expertise in successfully identifying best practices in science, technology, engineering and mathematics education and creating the most efficient, effective and meaningful delivery of the STEM curricula to its partner schools across the world.

**Goal 2: Create innovative STEM curriculum through pre-service and in service teacher training in critical thinking and problem solving.**

Thesecond goal of the project GREAT MINDS identified as a key area in development and implementation of STEM curricula is the training of both pre-service and service teachers in critical thinking and problem solving skills. To reach this goal and to produce teachers who have both the content knowledge and the skills to infuse that content with hands-on learning experiences in the areas of STEM education, several objectives have been identified as crucial. The principal objectives of the goal of creating innovative STEM curriculum through pre-service and in service teacher training in critical thinking and problem solving are:

* 1. to provide pre-service teachers with training in a hands-on STEM curriculum and pedagogy which would give them the knowledge of how to employ these strategies in their future classrooms;
  2. to provide service teachers with professional development where they would learn how to utilize a hands-on STEM curriculum in their classrooms;
  3. to provide local early childhood, elementary, middle, and high school students the opportunity make use of critical thinking and problem solving skills outside of the classroom environment; and
  4. to create a hands-on STEM environment where local students (PreK-grade 2) are able to learn STEM through inquiry based activities.

UWA will provide a high quality education infused with innovative ideas for STEM education for its pre-service teachers and professional development opportunities for the local in service teachers. To meet the overarching goal, pre-service teachers of all grade levels (early childhood, elementary, middle, and high school) will be trained in the use of hands-on and technology based activities which will focus on teaching critical thinking and problem solving skills in the content areas of math and science during their teaching methods courses. In order to accomplish this, an upgrade to an existing science laboratory is needed so that it includes all of the equipment and supplies required to teach hands-on, technology-based math, science, and engineering lessons. The DATA Lab (*Doing* Authentic Teaching Approach) must be furnished with equipment and supplies which foster hands-on, project based learning including microscopes, hand-held data collectors, hands-on science kits, math manipulatives, computers, etc. This lab will provide the future STEM teachers with the opportunity to see innovative STEM teaching and to practice their skills during their pre-service years at UWA. To expose GREAT MINDS pre-service teachers to current pedagogy UWA will provide participants with a subscription to a nationally recognized journal in their STEM area of choice and offer an opportunity to attend a national science, math, or technology conference.

Professional development for local in service teachers and the opportunity to participate in STEM education outside of the classroom are essential components for inspiring both teachers and students. UWA seeks to offer a STEM summer enrichment program which will include two distinct phases. Phase 1 will be a week-long summer camp planned for the professional development of current service teachers and pre-service teachers in the teacher education program in order to train them to incorporate critical thinking and problem solving skills in the classroom and to ensure a solid foundation in hands-on STEM activities. In order to promote the use of hands-on, technology-based lesson, teachers need on-going training so that they can become more comfortable and so that they can see first-hand the benefit of using these methods to encourage student critical thinking and problem solving. Once the teachers have completed Phase 1 of the summer enrichment program, Phase 2 of the program will begin. Phase 2 of the summer education program will be a STEM camp for students of all grade levels (P-12) taught by the service teachers and assisted by the pre-service teachers trained in Phase 1 in conjunction with UWA College of Education faculty, Presidential Awardees for Math and Science Teaching, and members of the professional community. Four groups including early childhood (grades preK-2), elementary (grades 3-5), middle (grades 6-8), and high school (grades 9-12) from the surrounding area, will be invited to participate in a week long summer camp where STEM will be experienced within an integrated theme. Units will be grade level appropriate and include, CSI-UWA during the first year, Going “Green” focusing on environmental awareness and green construction during year two, Flying to New Heights in year three, and Robotics for the fourth year of the program. The week would conclude with a major project culmination such as, solving a crime, building a house using “green” designs; a model airplane flight competition, or a robotics contest. Stipends will be given to all GREAT MINDS Project personnel in camp attendance as well as to service teachers who attend both weeks of the summer program. Additionally, a voucher will be awarded to the service teachers for the acquisition of hands-on science or math kits for their classrooms. The knowledge and skills obtained during the summer enrichment program will be reinforced through continued professional development for service teachers during the school year. Teachers who attend both weeks of the summer camp and all four professional development sessions during the school year will be awarded with an I-Pad as an incentive for participation and for empowering them to make good, autonomous decisions with the proper tools.

Younger children should also be inspired by the marvels of STEM while at the inquisitive stage of life. In addition to the summer enrichment program, UWA will create a STEM environment specifically designed to foster the natural curiosity of younger children centered on “structures” called “Construction Crew”. Local teachers and UWA’s Campus School teachers would be invited to bring their classes to campus throughout the year for activities specifically designed to inspire younger children and address their need for kinesthetic learning that most schools take away after kindergarten. The participants would study the structures around campus, town, and in their neighborhoods as well as have the opportunity to read, learn about, and build different structures. They would have multiple experiences handling and building using a variety of items, many of them simple straws, index cards, and other easily found items as well as materials such as Legos, K’nex, and blocks. Students would also be able to experience construction using simulated online structure building programs such as Google Sketch Up to design entire neighborhoods. The “Construction Crew” program has the potential to provide a year-round setting which fosters science and math inquiry through hands-on and technology based activities, while emphasizing the “E” component of STEM.

**Goal 3: Increase the enrollment and retention of high needs students in undergraduate teacher education programs**.

There are three objectives designed to address the goal of increasing the enrollment and subsequent retention of high needs students, specifically Black Americans into the teacher education program at UWA. The goal will be addressed by the following objectives:

3.1 to recruit junior and senior high school students for the teacher education program;

3.2 to retain students in the teacher education program until graduation; and

3.3 to make data-driven decisions to improve post-secondary outcomes for high needs students.

To address the first objective of increasing the enrollment in the teacher education program, UWA will establish a cohort of 20 students (10 juniors and 10 seniors) from our partnership schools across Alabama to become members THINK. The recruitment program will seek to identify Black American high school juniors and seniors who show interest in science, math, or technology and exemplify high academic standards from the surrounding local schools and focus recruitment efforts on this group. In order to reach these students, UWA will engage our faculty in an extensive recruitment process in partnership schools. During this phase, UWA faculty members will provide in-service workshops which promote UWA’s teacher education programs. The recruitment strategy will include STEM presentations at local high/middle schools, as well as relationship building activities for high school STEM teachers including professional development opportunities at both their school site and the UWA campus. In addition, selected high school STEM teachers will serve as facilitators, along with NSF Presidential Awardees and UWA Faculty in the STEM Conference which is an ongoing annual event hosted by UWA and the International STEM Summit which will be a special event held at the end of year four of the project. Furthermore, UWA faculty will assist local high school students and teachers in establishing or continuing their Future Teachers of America chapters in their local schools, and these participants will be given priority to register for the GREAT MINDS summer enrichment program.

To address the retention phase of the GREAT MINDS/THINK program, during the first year of the grant the top 10 first year recruits will be identified by the faculty for participation in the initial THINK cohort with a strong emphasis on mentoring and service learning. Each year thereafter, UWA will seek to recruit a minimum of 10 participants from the local school systems as the freshmen cohort. The initial mentoring program for first and second year students will be provided by UWA faculty members and supplemented by mentorship from Presidential Award Winning Math and Science teachers. For the first two years of the GREAT MINDS Project, peer mentoring will be provided by the top student applicant currently within the UWA College of Education. This applicant will be given a stipend to provide mentoring in student life, lead the THINK cohorts in team building activities, and work closely with the Project Director to provide a supportive, nurturing environment for the initials recruits. After year two of recruiting, this applicant will move into the role as the lead peer mentor and will be responsible for training additional peer mentors. After the first group moves into the third year of the program, those students will also be included as peer mentors for entering freshmen with the focus of their mentoring on adapting to college student life on campus. Peer mentors will be given a stipend for the added responsibilities, and will be required to meet a set of mentoring criteria established for the program.

Service learning will provide the members of THINK an opportunity to practice the knowledge and skills that they have obtained as well as give back to the community. During the second year, members of THINK will be required to participate in a service learning project centered on the STEM knowledge and skills obtained from their experience with the GREAT MINDS Project. Potential projects include working with Habitat for Humanity, Rural Studios, or Blitz Build to build sustainable housing in the Black Belt area. Students who successfully complete the THINK program and graduate will receive an I-Pad, if they have further met the following requirements: a minimum 3.0 G.P.A.; served one year as a peer mentor; and served two summers as a summer camp volunteer, and participated in a service learning project. The strategy outlined offers a strong nurturing environment with technology tools for access to global ideas and initiatives offered for successfully meeting benchmarks placed in the program.

To strengthen both the recruitment and retention measures of the THINK component of the GREAT MINDS Project, a teacher preparation classroom will be equipped with an LCD projector, Internet capabilities, a Promethean board and other current multi-media resources so that technology infused learning can be modeled. This multi-media classroom will be directly connected with the DATA Lab previously described which will support technology-rich, project-based and inquiry learning in the STEM areas. Students in the teacher education program will directly benefit by having access to the supplies and equipment needed to gain experience and confidence teaching in a manner that fosters exploration, creativity and discovery. The new lab and multi-media classroom will enable UWA to offer students the opportunity for interactive learning and hands-on experiments that has not previously existed.

The final objective, to make data-driven decisions to improve post-secondary outcomes for high needs students, drives the success of the THINK component of the GREAT MINDS Project. Data will be collected from recruitment, retention, and graduation efforts as well as from participant opinions regarding the effectiveness of the summer enrichment camps. The data will be analyzed in an effort to amend and improve upon the GREAT MINDS Project in its entirety, but specifically in its goal to increase the number of high needs students enrolling in and being retained in the teacher education program who desire to become STEM educators.

GREAT MINDS Goals, Objectives, and Outcomes

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| Goal One: Establish an international consortium to identify and discuss best practices in STEM education |  |
| Objective | **Outcome** |
| 1.1 The sharing and discussion of STEM best practices among colleagues via Skype and similar live-capture technologies | Create an International STEM consortium with partners in global higher education; businesses such as Google, Hyundai, Mercedes, etc.; award winning educators in STEM including Presidential Award Winners for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching, National Board Certified Teachers; as well as teachers from the local P-12 school systems |
| 1.2 Consistent and close consultation with and collaboration between educational and non-educational members, such as Google and the Marshall Space Flight Center, to ensure that the consortium’s identified best practices in STEM are indeed viable practices with real-world application | Create an International STEM consortium with partners in global higher education; businesses such as Google, Hyundai, Mercedes, etc.; award winning educators in STEM including Presidential Award Winners for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching, National Board Certified Teachers; as well as teachers from the local P-12 school systems. |
| 1.3 The use of streaming video and the exchange of pre-recorded “best practices” videos to be maintained in a central repository for use by all members | Install current technologies for video streaming including video- connect boxes, flat screen televisions, webcams, video microphones and other emerging technologies. |
| 1.4 Activities such as “quad blogging” by undergraduate students with their counterparts in other member countries | Establish a multi-media classroom equipped with emerging technologies. |
| 1.5 interaction between/among higher education partners and teacher candidates to discuss STEM pedagogy | Host an International STEM Summit for face-to-face or virtual sessions where local P-12 educators can interact with members of the International Consortium. |
| 1.6 the monitoring and implementation of the most current and emerging technologies for providing a climate of rich, vigorous participation, whether synchronously or asynchronously | Establish of a multi-media classroom equipped with emerging technologies and implement technology rich, hands-on learning activities into the science and math methods courses in the teacher education program. |
| 1.7 sharing responsibility for adapting identified best practices to the unique needs, considerations of cultural diversity, and available resources of the international membership | Create an International STEM consortium with partners in global higher education; businesses such as Google, Hyundai, Mercedes, etc.; award winning educators in STEM including Presidential Award Winners for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching, National Board Certified Teachers; as well as teachers from the local P-12 school systems. |
| *Activities::*   * *Video Conferencing* * *Video Recording* * *Establishing Video Repository* * *International STEM Summit* * *Establishment of a multi-media rich classroom* | ***Resources:***   * *Cisco or other type of teleconferencing; I-Pads, LCD projector, Promethean Board, Computers or other emerging technologies* * *Funds for travel, lodging, etc.* |
| Goal Two: Create innovative STEM curriculum through pre-service and in service teacher training in critical thinking and problem solving. |  |
| Objective | **Outcome** |
| 2.1 To provide pre-service teachers with training in a hands-on STEM curriculum and pedagogy which would give them the knowledge of how to employ these strategies in their future classrooms | A STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) lab (DATA-Lab) will be established for pre-service teachers so that they can participate in hands-on STEM activities during their methods courses. |
| 2.2 To provide service teachers with professional development where they would learn how to utilize a hands-on STEM curriculum in their classrooms | Local teachers who are already in service will be recruited to participate in a one-week long summer camp for teachers where they would be taught how to employ a STEM curriculum followed by a one-week long opportunity to practice teaching the STEM curriculum to local elementary, middle, and high school students. Additional, one day professional development sessions will be offered during the school year. |
| 2.3 To provide local elementary, middle, and high school students the opportunity make use of critical thinking and problem solving skills | Local elementary, middle, and high school students would be invited to participate in a week long STEM camp during the summer. The camp would be theme-based, integrate all STEM areas, and culminate in an end of the week project. |
| 2.4 To create a hands-on STEM environment where local students (elementary, middle, and high school) are able to learn STEM through inquiry based activities | A classroom would be converted into a hands-on STEM discovery environment focused on engineering where local school early childhood students would be able to become part of a “Construction Crew”. |
| *Activities:*   * *Equip a lab for inquiry based teaching and learning (DATA )* * *Subscriptions to renowned journals in science, math, technology or engineering areas* * *National Conference attendance* * *Summer enrichment camp* * *Professional development throughout the year for service teachers* * *Create a STEM discovery environment for early childhood students called “Construction Crew”* | ***Resources:***   * *Lab equipment and supplies* * *Stipends for teachers and faculty* * *I-pad and voucher for supplies for service teachers who attend all PD sessions* * *Funds for paying substitute teachers* * *Supplies such as glue, tape, straws, blocks, Legos, Knex, videos, etc.* * *Funds for journal subscriptions and conference registration as well as travel/room for pre-service teachers* |
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| Goal Three: To increase the enrollment and retention of high needs students in undergraduate teacher education programs |  |
| Objective | **Outcome** |
| 3.1 To recruit junior and senior high school students for the teacher education program | In school recruitment through presentations for students, workshops for teachers, and informational material will be provided. |
| 3.2 To retain students in the teacher education program until graduation | Establish a peer mentoring program.  Establish a service learning component of THINK.  Provide field trip experience for upper level THINK members. |
| 3.3 To make data-driven decisions to improve post-secondary outcomes from high needs students including recruiting, retaining, and graduating high-needs students from the local area | Institute data collection including  *Recruitment*   * The number of students and teachers participating in the summer camps * The number of teachers participating in professional development during the school year * The number of stakeholders visited by Project members * The number of freshmen entering the COE * Survey of teacher and student opinions of the summer camps   Retention   * The number of sophomores, juniors, seniors, and graduates of the program * The number of participants in and types of activities held for the GREAT MINDS participants * The number of participants in and types of service learning projects * Surveys of graduates of the program |
| *Activities:*   * *Recruiting* * *Mentor Program* * *Service Learning Project* * *Field Trips* * *Technology Incentive System* | ***Resources:***   * *Travel and recruitment materials expenses,* * *Stipends for faculty and junior level peer mentors* * *Funds for field trips* * *Funds for I-Pads for graduates as well as travel to “best practices” schools* * *Funds for survey distribution and other data collection and analysis* |

***b) the extent to which the design of the proposed project is appropriate to, and will successfully address, the needs of the target population or other identified needs***

The GREAT MINDS Project will address America’s need for improvement in the areas of science and mathematics in comparison to other countries globally by improving STEM education. The project proposes a unique approach to STEM education in that it solicits ideas for best practices in STEM education from a diverse population through the establishment of an international consortium. The international consortium will bring innovative ideas for teaching STEM to the Black Belt area. The project further proposes to directly impact both the teachers and the students in the impoverished area of the Black Belt by providing both pre-service and service teachers with experience in inquiry based, hands-on learning as well as content knowledge in the STEM areas. The science, math, and technology teachers in the surrounding areas although knowledgeable in the content area are inexperienced with the hands-on, inquiry based learning needed to spark interest and enthusiasm for STEM success. These teachers often lack the skills to illicit critical thinking and problem solving from their students simply because this has not been modeled or practiced. GREAT MINDS intends to change the approach to STEM education by providing pre-service and in-service teachers with the training needed to put innovative STEM education into practice in the classroom.

Furthermore the GREAT MINDS Project will excite students (grades PreK-12) and foster their curiosity by offering a theme-based summer enrichment program which affords the local student population an opportunity to learn STEM outside of the classroom in a discovery environment. To break the cycle of repeating “direct instruction”, the summer enrichment camps will involve both students and teachers in the discovery method of learning STEM. Additionally, to target the young, while they are still uninhibited by fear of failure, UWA plans to create a STEM learning environment specifically for PreK-second grade following the theme of “Construction Crew” where exploration in building and design highlights the “E” in STEM education. All students in P-12 education in the surrounding local schools will be invited to participate in the summer enrichment program and 40 students from each grade classification (P-2, 3-5, 6-8, and 9-12) will be selected for the summer enrichment program. Transportation to the local service center offering free and reduced lunches will be provided to the students.

Finally, the GREAT MINDS Project will impact the students living in the West Alabama area by focusing its efforts for recruitment and retention of Black American students for UWA’s teacher education program. The UWA student population consists of many first generation Black college students who lack the role models needed to successfully complete an undergraduate program. GREAT MINDS/THINK intends to not only recruit qualified applicants for the teacher education program, but also focus on retaining these students through graduation. The THINK program will establish a strong support system through the use of both faculty and peer mentors, an incentive system for completing identified benchmarks throughout the program, and by involving the students in service learning, thereby giving back to the local community.